

REMARKS

Claims 1, 3-10, 12-18, 20-31 and 33-37 are pending in the present application. By this amendment, independent claims 1, 10, 17, 22 and 31 have been amended; and claims 38-41 are newly added. It is respectfully submitted that no new matter has been added by these amendments.

Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. §102

Claims 1, 3-5, 9-10 and 12-14 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as allegedly being anticipated by EP 588,176 to Hongo et al. (hereafter "Hongo"). This rejection is respectfully traversed.

Claim 1 is directed to instrument panel comprising a thermoplastic base substrate having a first surface and a second surface; wherein the thermoplastic base substrate consists essentially of fiber reinforcements and polyethylene or polypropylene or combinations thereof; at least one tear seam notch pressed into said first surface of said base substrate; at least one consolidated area pressed into said second surface of said base substrate, said at least one consolidated area aligned with said at least one tear seam notch; at least one hinge area comprising an area of low consolidation wherein a thickness of said base substrate at said low consolidation area is greater than a thickness of said base substrate at said at least one consolidation area, said at least one tear seam notch and said at least one hinge area defining at least one airbag door.

Claim 10 is directed to an instrument panel system comprising an instrument panel and an airbag, said air bag positioned adjacent said instrument panel, said instrument panel comprising a thermoplastic base substrate having a first surface and a second surface; wherein the thermoplastic base substrate consists essentially of fiber reinforcements and polyethylene or polypropylene or combinations thereof; said air bag positioned adjacent said second surface of said base substrate; at least one tear seam notch pressed into said first surface of said base substrate; at least one consolidated area pressed into said second surface of said base substrate, said at least one consolidated area aligned with said at least one tear seam notch; at least one hinge area comprising an area of low consolidation wherein a thickness of said base substrate at said low consolidation area is greater than a thickness of said base substrate at said at least one consolidation area, said at least one tear seam notch and said at least one hinge area defining at

least one airbag door, said tear seam notch configured to open when said airbag deploys permitting said airbag to deploy through said instrument panel.

The Office Action states that Hongo teaches a thermoplastic base substrate having a first surface and a second surface; at least one tear seam notch (19) pressed into said first surface of said base substrate; at least one consolidated area (19, 118) pressed into said second surface of said base substrate, said at least one consolidated area aligned with said at least one tear seam notch; at least one hinge area comprising an area of low consolidation wherein a thickness of said base substrate at said low consolidation area is greater than a thickness of said base substrate at said at least one consolidation area, said at least one tear seam notch and said at least one hinge area defining at least one airbag door.

It is respectfully submitted that Hongo fails to teach or suggest Applicants' claimed invention. Claims 1 and 10, as amended, state that the thermoplastic base substrate consists essentially of fiber reinforcements and polyethylene or polypropylene or combinations thereof. As such, it is respectfully submitted that Hongo fails to teach Applicants' claimed invention.

For at least the reasons given above, it is respectfully submitted that claim 1 and claim 10 are allowable over the prior art of record. Since claims 3-5, 9 and 12-14 depend from one of claim 1 or claim 10, it is respectfully submitted that these claims are also allowable.

Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. §103

Claims 22-25 and 29-30 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as allegedly being unpatentable over Hongo in view of GB 2,263,667 to Karlsson et al. (hereafter "Karlsson"). This rejection is respectfully traversed.

Claim 22 is directed to a method of producing an instrument panel system comprising an instrument panel and an airbag, said method comprising press molding a thermoplastic base substrate having a first surface and a second surface into a predetermined shape of the instrument panel; wherein the thermoplastic base substrate consists essentially of fiber reinforcements and polyethylene or polypropylene or combinations thereof; wherein press molding the base substrate comprises: pressing at least one tear seam notch into the base substrate; pressing at least one consolidated area into the second surface of the base substrate, the at least one consolidated area aligned with the at least one tear seam notch; pressing at least one hinge area into the second surface of the base substrate, each hinge area comprising an area of low consolidation wherein a thickness of the base substrate at the low consolidation area is greater than the thickness of the

base substrate at a consolidation area, the at least one tear seam notch and the at least one hinge area defining at least one airbag door.

It is respectfully submitted that the combination of Hongo and Karlsson fails to teach or suggest Applicant's claimed invention. Hongo fails to teach or suggest as instrument panel thermoplastic base substrate having fiber reinforced polyethylene or polypropylene or combination thereof. Karlsson fails to remedy the deficiencies of Hongo. Karlsson does not teach the thermoplastic base substrate having fiber reinforced polyethylene or polypropylene or combination thereof. As such, it is respectfully submitted that the combination of Hongo and Karlsson fails to teach or suggest Applicants' claimed invention.

For at least the reasons given above, it is respectfully submitted that claim 22 is allowable over the prior art of record. Since claims 22-25 and 29-30 depend from claim 22, it is respectfully submitted that these claims are also allowable.

Claims 6-8 and 15-16 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as allegedly being unpatentable over Hongo in view of Wirt. This rejection is respectfully traversed.

It is respectfully submitted that the combination of Hongo and Wirt fails to teach or suggest Applicant's claimed invention. Claim 1 and claim 10 have been discussed previously and as previously discussed, Hongo fails to teach or suggest as instrument panel thermoplastic base substrate having fiber reinforced polyethylene or polypropylene or combination thereof. Wirt fails to remedy the deficiencies of Hongo. Wirt does not teach the thermoplastic base substrate having fiber reinforced polyethylene or polypropylene or combination thereof. In addition Wirt teaches a hinge portion 32 and does not teach or suggest any consolidated area at all. As such, it is respectfully submitted that the combination of Hongo and Wirt fails to teach or suggest Applicants' claimed invention.

For at least the reasons given above, it is respectfully submitted that claim 1 and claim 10 are allowable over the prior art of record. Since claims 6-8 and 15-16 depend from one of claim 1 or claim 10, it is respectfully submitted that these claims are also allowable.

Claims 17-21, 26-28 and 31-37 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as allegedly being unpatentable over Hongo in view of Karlsson and Wirt. This rejection is respectfully traversed.

Claim 22 has been discussed previously. Claim 17 is directed to an instrument panel comprising: a thermoplastic base substrate having a first surface and a second surface; wherein the thermoplastic base substrate consists essentially of fiber reinforcements and polyethylene or polypropylene or combinations thereof; an intermediate layer adjacent said first surface of said base substrate, said intermediate layer comprising a resilient material; an outer layer adjacent said intermediate layer; at least one airbag door defined by at least one tear seam notch pressed into said base substrate and at least one hinge area comprising an area of low consolidation in said base substrate, said at least one airbag door not visible through said outer layer before an airbag deployment causes said at least one airbag door to open.

Claim 31 is directed to a thermoplastic panel comprising at least one hidden airbag door, said panel further comprising: a thermoplastic base substrate having a first surface and a second surface; wherein the thermoplastic base substrate consists essentially of fiber reinforcements and polyethylene or polypropylene or combinations thereof; at least one tear seam notch pressed into said base substrate; at least one consolidated area pressed into said second surface of said base substrate, said at least one consolidated area aligned with said at least one tear seam notch; at least one hinge area comprising an area of low consolidation wherein a thickness of said base substrate at said low consolidation area is greater than a thickness of said base substrate at said at least one consolidation area, said at least one tear seam notch and said at least one hinge area defining at least one airbag door.

It is respectfully submitted that the combination of Hongo, Karlsson and Wirt fails to teach or suggest Applicant's claimed inventions. As previously discussed, Hongo fails to teach or suggest as instrument panel thermoplastic base substrate having fiber reinforced polyethylene or polypropylene or combination thereof. Karlsson fails to remedy the deficiencies of Hongo. Karlsson does not teach the thermoplastic base substrate having fiber reinforced polyethylene or polypropylene or combination thereof. In addition Karlsson does not teach or suggest intermediate or outer layer. Wirt fails to remedy Hongo and Karlsson. Wirt does not teach the thermoplastic base substrate having fiber reinforced polyethylene or polypropylene or combinations thereof. In addition Wirt teaches a hinge portion 32 and does not teach or suggest any consolidated area at all. As such, it is respectfully submitted that the combination of Hongo, Karlsson and Wirt fails to teach or suggest Applicants' claimed invention.

For at least the reasons given above, it is respectfully submitted that claim 17; claim 22 and claim 31 are allowable over the prior art of record. Since claims 18, 20-21, 26-28 and 32-37 depend from one of claim 17, claim 22 or claim 31, it is respectfully submitted that these claims are also allowable.

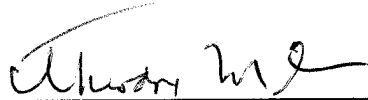
Conclusion

For at least the reasons given above, it is respectfully submitted that the foregoing amendments and remarks fully comply with the Office Action and that the claims herein should now be allowable to Applicants. Accordingly, reconsideration and allowance are requested.

If there are any additional charges with respect to this Amendment or otherwise, please charge them to Deposit Account No. 50-3622.

Respectfully submitted,

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